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Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by International Alliance of Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-33680 (E) 020610

Please recycle

Statement

Tobacco free is a woman's rights issue

A new World Health Organization (WHO) report on Gender, Women and Tobacco, to be released on World No Tobacco Day 2010 points out that there are more than a billion smokers worldwide and that about 9 per cent of women and 40 per cent of men smoke. By 2015, tobacco use is expected to cause almost three times as many deaths as HIV/AIDS and will be responsible for 10 per cent of all deaths. Those trends will worsen unless we act now. The International Alliance of Women and the International Network of Women Against Tobacco believes that preventing an epidemic of tobacco use among women is essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals related to gender equality, poverty, child and maternal health.

Health and poverty lie at the heart of the issue. Poor women, both urban and rural, are disproportionately affected by the tobacco epidemic. In many countries, these women are the ones who use tobacco the most and yet have the least access to information and services, making them vulnerable to the tobacco industry's marketing of their deadly products. In developing countries, rural women working in tobacco production, manufacture and marketing are exploited by unfair wages and substandard work conditions. The economic burden of deaths due to tobacco use and exposure also falls hardest on women. Imagine the plight of someone who has lost a husband to lung cancer, and is suddenly thrust into the role of sole breadwinner for the family. If she is one of the millions of illiterate women without rights to land or credit, how can she hope for decent work?

The health of economies as well as mothers and children is at stake. Tobacco aggravates efforts to mobilize resources and optimize financing for development. Rapid urbanization and changes in lifestyle and diet mean that scarce resources are now being used for treatment of non-communicable diseases. According to WHO, estimates of the total costs of medical care for treatment of smoking-related diseases range from 6 per cent to 15 per cent of countries' total health-care costs and from 0.1 per cent to 1.1 per cent of gross domestic product. The annual direct medical costs of prenatal and post-natal second-hand exposure for children in the United States totalled $44.6 billion in 2001. Many low-income households spend more on tobacco than on food and education. In Indonesia, where smoking is most common among the poor, 15 per cent of the total expenditure of the lowest income group is on tobacco, while the poorest 20 per cent of households in Mexico spend nearly 11 per cent of their income on tobacco.

In addition, commercial interests have violated women's rights. Poor developing countries are flooded with advertisements portraying smoking as glamorous and modern. Tobacco companies have specially designed brands for women. The appeal to women is twofold: attractive packaging and terms like "light" and "mild" to make their products seem less harmful. These misleading strategies are an affront to women's dignity and violate our rights to protection against false advertising.

We draw your attention to these health facts: women who smoke or exposed to smoke are more likely than non-smokers to experience reproductive problems. Men's reproductive health is also affected. Paternal smoking may negatively affect

sperms and can contribute to infertility. Smoking during pregnancy increases risks of premature birth, stillbirth, and neonatal death and may cause a reduction in breast milk. In addition, smoking and smoke exposure is one of the major causes of coronary heart disease in women. Smoking and smoke exposure are also risk factors for developing breast cancer. The rights of women to a safe and healthy environment are violated most when they are exposed to second-hand smoke. This can happen at work or in public places, but it happens mostly at home where women are often powerless to speak up for their own rights. The scientific evidence on second-hand smoke is clear. You can get lung cancer from consistent exposure. Indeed, an estimated 580 lung cancer deaths in the Americas in 2003 were caused by second-hand smoke. Exposure to second-hand smoke results in lower respiratory illnesses, middle-ear disease and reduced lung function in children and an increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome.

Pregnancy can provide an opportunity to improve the health of the entire family, but maternal health programmes have to stop blaming the victim. Most health practitioners talk to pregnant women who smoke about quitting in order to have a safe and healthy pregnancy. However, little attention has been paid to empowering women to reduce their tobacco use or exposure, particularly that in the home. To achieve the Goal on maternal mortality of the Millennium Development Goals, reproductive health services should address the health of women and men, mothers and fathers. Smoking-cessation interventions designed specifically for women and men need to be developed and delivered to audiences of women and men in appropriate, gender-specific environments.

We believe that women's empowerment is key to achieving smoke-free homes and should be included in all maternal and child health policies. And since men are currently the majority of the world's smokers, they are an important audience for anti-tobacco campaigns and key to protecting women's rights to health.

As noted by article 12 and the General Recommendation on health in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and many recommendations in the Beijing Platform for Action, a woman's right to health is a human right. Governments represented here have signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and endorsed the policy documents upholding these rights. At least 170 Governments have also ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which outlines the international standards and legislation that would set the right course for tobacco control with gender equality.

The grave situation calls for adding tobacco use as an indicator for the Millennium Development Goals in reducing poverty and furthering women's rights to health. To date, national legislation has yet to provide adequate protection. Despite the scientific evidence that tobacco kills, nearly 90 per cent of the world's population remains uncovered by comprehensive smoke-free laws. We call for Governments to legislate and enforce strong tobacco control measures. Much more can be done by raising taxes to reduce tobacco use. Governments should also enforce total bans on advertising and promotion, including standardized plain packaging, and improved health warnings that address our concerns. Take action now so that the Millennium Development Goals can rapidly move forward.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by International Association of Applied Psychology, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-33687 (E) 260510

Please recycle

Statement

Grass-roots preparation for women's right to work

The right to work is important in and of itself in times of crisis and prosperity alike. Despite progress in many regions, fewer women participate in paid work than men. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has shown that access to labour markets and to decent work remain particularly limited for women. Women disproportionately are represented in informal work and concentrated in informal contract work in many parts of the world; this is so especially in developing regions where they remain outside the labour force completely. This is not by choice. Women would work in legitimate paid jobs rather than participate in fringe and non-economic activities if they had a choice. They are limited not only by the lack of jobs but also by other factors, including exploitation by those who benefit from poor women, such as gangs, money lenders, and by the feudal and gender hierarchy and caste systems.

The International Association of Applied Psychology believes this system can be changed by the development of grass-roots advocacy groups to work with poor women to help them to develop organizational, advocacy and leadership skills that will allow them to overcome impediments to finding paid work or developing their own entrepreneurial businesses. These grass-roots type of organizations have been successful in many parts of the world and we advocate the development of such groups under the advocacy of the Economic and Social Council.

The grass-roots groups are developed around shared experiences or identities, including religious groups; a particular life status such as single motherhood; treatment for a specific illness such as HIV; widowhood; a civic interest; or an interest in child-rearing. The groups under the direction of a local trained leader teach the organizational, advocacy and leadership skills related to the reason for the group formation and then generalize these skills to the world of work. The skills are taught based on their own life experiences. For example, an organization called Lideres Campesinas developed these skills among indigenous women farm workers. They were trained to recognize their own inherent skills by asking them to describe situations in which they organized parties, dinners and other family events. They asked them whether they ever advocated for a child, friend, parent or family member to achieve something for them. They demystified leadership for them by showing them how they displayed it in everyday encounters. Once they recognized these skills, they could generalize them to other situations such as gaining employment, withstanding exploitation, asserting themselves in their families and community and even developing their own businesses.

This procedure could be established in all parts of the world and individuals could be trained to develop and lead such groups. It is likely that once the process is started it will spread throughout the community and include greater numbers of women to be empowered. We believe the Economic and Social Council should explore developing these grass-roots groups in the coming year.

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Item 14 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Social and human rights questions: social development

Statement submitted by International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-33693 (E) 040610

Please recycle

Statement

Participation of people living in poverty

During the forty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development, civil society organizations emphasized the fact that enhancing the participation of people living in poverty was of great importance in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In the years since the commitments of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the top-down approach has brought about economic growth, which only benefited a few members of society. The masses of people living in poverty, in particular women and girls, did not benefit during these years. The gap between the few who possess the world's wealth and those who live in extreme poverty has become deeper. We urgently need a process that will enhance a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches towards development, peace, security and respecting human rights, with the goal of ensuring everyone a life of dignity.

"People-centred development" demands maximum participation of the citizens in the development agenda. People living in poverty feel powerless and alienated because they do not have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. They lack structures that provide opportunities to become active citizens so that they can exercise their rights and responsibilities. The electoral constituencies of the different levels in a representative democracy are so big that the people living in poverty have no forum for meaningful participation to enable their "small voices" to be heard. Effective and sustained participation can take place only when people are ensured a viable forum in which to have a say in the decision-making that affects their lives.

Some of the good practices of the participatory structures in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the participation law of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and in some states in India have demonstrated the effectiveness of greater participation of people in the development agenda. A common trait in these good practices is that the forums for participatory decision-making are at the neighbourhood level, enhancing opportunities for wider inclusion.

We recommend:

(a) Bringing forums for political, social and economic decision-making down to the grass-roots level by means of territorially inclusive neighbourhood forums of adults and children. It is imperative that such forums remain small-sized, face-to-face communities at every level so that the small voices of the marginalized and the weak do not get drowned out, lost or unheeded;

(b) Initiating a process for practical and inclusive citizenship training for adults and children with specific attention to women and girls, by organizing territorially responsive neighbourhood forums;

(c) Constantly reinforcing such territorially inclusive neighbourhood forums through a process of convergence, whereby whatever can be done is done through such forums;

(d) Accessing these forums to gather accurate disaggregated data;

(e) Ensuring that such neighbourhood forums are federated at various levels of governance for wider reach and impact;

(f) Utilizing the process of smaller neighbourhood groups and a federated structure to foster universal inclusion by upholding the value of maximum participation of vulnerable people;

(g) Partnering with non-governmental organizations to engage people living in poverty in participatory processes to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by School Sisters of Notre Dame, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-33699 (E) 260510

Please recycle

Statement

Remember the girls

The Economic and Social Council's review of progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is particularly relevant. Following on the heels of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which reviewed progress since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, it comes just weeks before the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, which will review progress in achieving the goals outlined in the 2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration.

Unfortunately, progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven and inadequate, particularly for girls. Their unique needs and concerns have been largely discounted or ignored. Marginalized in the discussion of women's rights and empowerment and too often ignored when children's rights and needs are considered, girls are often missing from international, national and local policy discussions and programme development. The results have been devastating for girls and their communities:

- As many as 100 million girls who would otherwise be expected to be alive are "missing" as a result of sex-selective abortions, infanticide or neglect
- Four million women and girls are bought and sold worldwide each year for marriage, prostitution, or slave labour
- More than 100 million girls under 18 years of age, some as young as 12, are expected to marry over the next decade
- Sixty-two million girls are not in primary school and 100 million more will fail to complete their primary education

Girls are missing from their homes, from their schools and from policy discussions at every level. Girls are seldom invited to the table where decisions are made and are often forgotten by those who make the law and develop Government policy. Too many girls are still silenced by their parents, out-shouted by their brothers, neglected by their teachers and forgotten by their Governments.

Please, remember the girls: they are your sisters, your daughters, your granddaughters; empower them:

- Education is the right of every girl and the key to transforming her life and her community. Remove all barriers to education for girls, including discriminatory attitudes, behaviours and curricula
- Women play critical roles in the life and well-being of their families and communities. Increase the competence of girls through education and training that includes social, political and economic empowerment
- The skills, ideas and energy of all girls, especially those from disadvantaged groups, are vital for sustainable development. Promote the participation, visibility and empowerment of all girls by creating safe spaces for them to speak and to obtain assistance
- Families are healthier and communities stronger when girls are full participants. Strengthen the role of civil society, especially girls' organizations, in tackling gender stereotypes and ending discrimination.

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Social and human rights questions: human rights

Statement submitted by International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-33706 (E) 120510

Please recycle

Statement

Human rights-based approach: a way to achieve the Millennium Development Goals

The Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor reported that tens of millions of people, including 70 per cent of children born in the least developed countries, lack a legal identity, as a result of their very existence not having been officially acknowledged. Reporting on General Assembly resolution 63/142, entitled "Legal empowerment of the poor and eradication of poverty", the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated that the development strategy should be set by the people living in poverty and for the people living in poverty. Furthermore, it should also be guided by the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination, participation and accountability. In her book *The Unheard Truth: Poverty and Human Rights*, the Secretary-General of Amnesty International called for fairly administered laws to transform societies and for empowering people to claim their rights and engage with the institutions that set and administer laws.

We recommend that Governments:

(a) Provide education so that people can understand the different human rights instruments and how they can be implemented to benefit individuals and communities in order that policies promoting human dignity do not stay on paper but are actively engaged;

(b) Put monitoring mechanisms in place to disclose policies to the concerned people;

(c) Ensure bottom-up education processes which provide women and girls with knowledge of their rights so that they are empowered to engage with legal institutions;

(d) Make legal empowerment one of the Millennium Development Goals;

(e) Introduce participatory forums for political, social, religious and economic decision-making to grass-roots levels by means of local consultative and inclusive neighbourhood organizations. In order for the voices of the marginalized and/or weak not to get drowned out, lost, or to go unheard, and for the people living in poverty not to remain voiceless, it is imperative that such forums remain small, face-to-face and community-based at every level. It is essential to ensure that such neighbourhood forums are federated at various levels of governance for wider reach and impact;

(f) Develop national policies to ensure the protection of the fundamental rights and basic living conditions of internally displaced people, in particular in respect of maternal and child health. Treaties or agreements on the respect for and dignified treatment of immigrants are essential. Laws, regulations and government information should be available in various languages and/or be made available through translation services;

(g) Ensure microfinancing for vulnerable people, enabling sustainable livelihood security across the world. The situation and the needs of vulnerable groups need to be recognized in Government policies. Over-indebted people need to be guaranteed access to basic banking services; financial education and advice

should be developed; and the social responsibility of financial institutions should be encouraged and monitored;

(h) Ensure that women, who are engaged in every sector of life, are equally represented at all levels of bureaucracy and in Government departments in order that there may be a proper balance of men and women in the workplace.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Gray Panthers, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34113 (E) 120510

Please recycle

Statement

Gray Panthers is honoured to submit the present statement to the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2010 of the Economic and Social Council on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women and the Development Cooperation Forum theme "Development cooperation in times of crises: new commitments to reach the Millennium Development Goals".

The Millennium Development Goals have eight international development goals that all 192 United Nations Member States have agreed to achieve by 2015. The goals include eradicating extreme poverty; achieving primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development. The time is only five years away from the target date, and it seems to be unreachable. The global financial crisis, the food crisis and the climate change crisis add more challenges to realizing the Millennium Development Goals. Gender equality and women's empowerment is the way to a successful solution. Women of all ages play an important role in reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS and eradicating extreme poverty.

Women continue to be treated as inferior to men, especially in developing countries. They are disadvantaged in education, financial resources, health care, land ownership, access to information technology, employment opportunities, social activities and decision-making positions (18.8 per cent in parliaments worldwide and 7 per cent in official negotiation delegations). This is especially true for older women. Yet women are responsible for the life of the family. They put food on the table. They are responsible for taking care of children and the elderly. Sometimes they travel long distances to fetch water, food and firewood in order to feed the family. In 2005, more than half a million mothers died as a consequence of childbirth. Low-income countries account for 83 per cent of all deaths of children under five, as reported by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.

Education plays a vital role in gender equality and leads to better income as well. In some African countries, children of mothers who have spent five years in primary education are 40 per cent more likely to live beyond the age of five. Statistics show women reinvest 90 per cent of their income in their families and communities, compared to men who reinvest only 30 per cent to 40 per cent. Giving women financial and social opportunities equal to those of men is the key to community development. Funding for reproductive health care and family planning can cut down maternal mortality and child mortality, as well as prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. Promoting gender equality can decrease domestic violence and violence against women.

Gray Panthers believe that gender equality and empowerment for women of all ages is the key to development and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Equal representation of women in policymaking positions ensures that women's voices are heard. The United Nations needs to hold nations accountable by working with parliaments, local governments and the private sector. With the involvement of the whole community and non-governmental organizations, the internationally agreed goals of the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action can be reached.

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Development Cooperation Forum

Statement submitted by Institute of International Social Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100

10-34120 (E) 270510

Please recycle

Statement

The recommendations of Institute are set out below.

- Inculcation of a minimum common index on human values, which needs to be included in the Millennium Development Goals. While all other goals give direction, none of it specifies the leakage that might be there in achieving the goals due to crime, resistance, corruptive practices by the players etc. When such a compulsion is included then the players remain within a code of well-defined commitment.
- In framing the codes of human values for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the international community needs to cooperate and work out the minimum common index on human values for the sake of ensuring implementation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and a better world.
- The United Nations has to frame an index of development not only based on per capita economic prosperity but also on the prosperity of the nation, including at the grass-roots level. Conflicts, terrorism and wars can be mostly attributed to the fact that development has still not touched a vast majority of the population of the world, which does not even have the basic necessities of life. We call for such an index to encourage nations to participate as members of the global world, through commitments to spread prosperity and development to all their people.
- Nations across the globe should share and exchange best practices, and cooperate and assist each other in achieving the Millennium Development Goals within the target date of 2015. The United Nations can play a leading role in this by encouraging cooperation at the national level and providing a platform for easier exchange and sharing of best practices.
- The United Nations can also help to formulate strategies to help each nation attain the Millennium Development Goals, with the involvement of partnering civil society organizations. In special areas of conflict and war, it is important for the United Nations system to support civil society and advise the leadership of countries, with a view to helping them to bring about peace and development in their respective countries and to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by International Planned Parenthood Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34221 (E) 200510

Please recycle

Statement

The International Planned Parenthood Federation welcomes the theme of the 2010 annual ministerial review. A new agenda of investment in women and girls, in their education, especially secondary education, in their health, especially their sexual and reproductive health, including maternal health, and investing in their empowerment and employment could be the catalyst for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and sustainable social and economic development.

The organization recognizes that sexual and reproductive health and rights are central to addressing obstacles related to women's advancement worldwide and to reaching the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and equity and to equitable and sustainable development. Working through 148 member associations in 171 countries, the organization is committed to implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo), the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) and the Millennium Development Goals, all of which strive to advance gender equality and empower women. Although advances in gender equality and the empowerment of women have been made, much remains to be done. It is clear that progress remains uneven; this is reflected in the continuing imbalance in power between women and men.

To implement the internationally agreed goals and commitments relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women, it is necessary to ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights are prioritized at all levels. This is because sexual and reproductive ill health accounts for one third of the global burden of disease among women of reproductive age and one fifth of the burden of disease among the population overall. Estimates suggest that over half a million women die every year due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth, with 99 per cent of the deaths occurring in developing countries, mainly South Asia and Africa. Millions more undergo long-term physical, psychological, social and economic problems as a result of pregnancy and childbirth-related factors.

This lack of priority for sexual and reproductive health and rights is highlighted in the lack of progress in reducing the rate of maternal mortality. Between 1990 and 2005, maternal mortality declined at a rate of less than 1 per cent per year globally, considerably below the 5.5 per cent annual improvement needed to reach Goal 5 of the Millennium Development Goals, which, at this rate, will not be met in Asia until 2076, and later still in Africa. Despite this, the Goal can and must be achieved.

Many of the most obstructive barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment are related to women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, and these obstacles disproportionately affect young women. Approximately 14.3 million adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 give birth each year. Girls in this age group are twice as likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth as those over 20. For young women 15 to 19 years of age, worldwide pregnancy-related complications are the leading cause of death. Women know what they want and how to achieve it, but are too often denied the means or opportunity to decide. An estimated 215 million women, that is 15 per cent of all women aged 15 to 49, who want to delay pregnancy cannot access an effective method of contraception.

Meeting the unmet need for both family planning and maternal health services together would have dramatic health outcomes. Unintended pregnancies would drop by more than two thirds, from 75 million in 2008 to 22 million per year. Maternal deaths would decline from 550,000 to 160,000. Unsafe abortions would decline by 73 per cent, from 20 million to 5.5 million (assuming no change in abortion laws), and the number of women needing medical care for complications of unsafe procedures would decline from 8.5 million to 2 million. In such an integrated strategy, it would cost only $8 for every woman of reproductive age who wants to practise modern contraception to be able to do so. However, funding for family planning has been halved between 1997 and 2006.

Young women are more vulnerable to HIV infection, with only 38 per cent of girls and young women worldwide estimated to have accurate, comprehensive knowledge about HIV and prevention. Women and girls also bear a disproportionate burden as caregivers and may suffer greater discrimination when they are or are perceived to be living with HIV. Issues such as poverty, violence against women and girls, lack of access to land and property, conflict, homelessness or lack of stable housing, lack of access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information, combine to drive and/or exacerbate the impact of HIV on women and girls. Other structural barriers make women more vulnerable, including the criminalization of HIV transmission, which can prevent women from knowing their HIV status and accessing relevant services and exacerbate discrimination and violence. A comprehensive response to addressing the gender dimensions of the HIV epidemic, including integration of family planning and HIV/AIDS policies and programmes, will help to reverse the epidemic and increase the chances of achieving Goal 6 of the Millennium Development Goals.

Barriers to gender equality and the empowerment of women start with discrimination at an early age. Disparities in the ways in which boys and girls are raised are often at the core of problems related to sexual and reproductive health, and women's place in society, and are therefore at the centre of development challenges. Girls may experience restrictions and find their freedom of movement and association limited. The predetermination of gender roles often restricts girls' ability to compete equally with their male counterparts. Girls are often forced to marry at an early age and begin childbearing before they are either mentally or physically ready. According to the United Nations Population Fund, 82 million girls in developing countries, between the ages of 10 and 17, will be married before they reach 18. Young women are particularly vulnerable to early marriage; complications related to pregnancy; unsafe abortion; sexual violence and coercion; human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation; female genital mutilation; the discontinuation of studies (often due to child marriage or adolescent pregnancy) and poverty. All of these issues are related to sexual and reproductive health and rights and are key determinants that impede progress in gender equality and empowerment.

To help achieve gender equality, therefore, it is vital that young women be empowered to exercise their rights, to make decisions that will affect their lives, and to take up leadership roles in decision-making and income generation. In many parts of the world, young women have less access to education, health services and fewer opportunities for employment in the formal labour market than young men. With restricted access to education and training, many young women are forced to work in the informal sector, hindering any advances for gender equality. In addition, many

young girls who become pregnant are forced to discontinue their education. This has long-term implications for these young women, their families and their communities and entrenches prevailing gender stereotypes and roles. In these ways, adolescent pregnancy, unsafe abortion and exposure to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, can have a major impact on a young woman's education and future employment opportunities and health.

If a young woman delays childbearing until she has achieved her own educational goals, it has broad social and economic benefits, not just for her, and her family, but for society at large. Sexual and reproductive health services contribute towards improving the social position of women and the ability of women to participate equally in society. Educated women have more options than those without an education. Educated women usually have fewer children, more widely spaced pregnancies, and the children they do have are generally healthier and better educated. Educated women are more likely to be employed. Increasing women's economic opportunities, and control of assets, also contributes to the path out of poverty. It is vital that young women and girls have access to comprehensive and gender-sensitive sexuality education in both formal and informal settings. This provides life-saving knowledge and contributes to reducing gender stereotypes and violence against women.

The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development highlighted the importance of placing sexual and reproductive health at the centre of efforts to advance gender equality and development. The Beijing Platform of Action gave special attention to issues related to the sexual and reproductive rights of women, including access to family planning, maternal health and safe abortion services as a way to achieve gender equality. Access to these services is rooted within international human rights obligations and recognized by treaty monitoring bodies. A woman's right to access contraceptive services is recognized by those bodies, with a lack of access to family planning understood to constitute a violation of the right to health. The Human Rights Council resolution on preventable maternal mortality (11/8) recognizes preventable maternal mortality and morbidity as a human rights issue.

Limited and uneven progress on Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals demonstrates the lack of priority afforded to gender equality by Member States. Although gender cross-cuts all the Millennium Development Goals, gender equality is to a large extent isolated in one goal. Even if the targets of Goal 3 were reached, this would not ensure that progress on gender equality or the empowerment of women would be advanced. This is because Goal 3 fails to address many of the deep-rooted obstacles that impede women's rights. It is the goal that relates both to gender and health that is the most off-track (Goal 5).

To address pervasive inequalities, Member States must:

- Ensure that target 5b, universal access to reproductive health, is afforded the funding and political priority it deserves in order to meet the unmet needs of 215 million women and the need of the world's largest generation of young people.
- Develop effective strategies to ensure gender equity and gender-sensitive sexual and reproductive health and rights programmes and policies. These should be central to any new development framework that follows from the

current internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals framework in 2015.

- Recognize that the success of international and national development frameworks, policies and plans will require the meaningful engagement of civil society and the leadership in this process by young women.
- Prioritize policies and funding by Member States to meet Goals 5 and 6.
- Ensure adequate financial resources to implement effective interventions to improve the health and well-being of girls and women. Ensure that health systems prioritize women's health and that women's health is used as an indicator of the success of health systems.
- Meet the educational and service needs of adolescents, by providing access to comprehensive sexuality education.
- Implement measures to fully integrate women into the formal economy, in order to ensure that women and men are treated equally in both formal and informal working environments.
- Increase the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into all legislation, policies and programmes to ensure gender-responsive budgeting.
- Develop institutional mechanisms that advance women's human rights and reform laws that discriminate against women or impede their ability to exercise their rights.
- Enhance the monitoring of States' compliance with international human rights obligations, particularly in the area of sexual and reproductive health.

Finally, it is incumbent upon Member States to do all that they can to take the proactive steps necessary to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. Without such progress, the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Equality Now, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34156 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

Every year in which women continue to face State-sanctioned discrimination in the form of discriminatory laws is another year of suffering and lost opportunity for girls and women and their communities, at the local, national and international levels. Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals, which includes the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, will not be achieved without basic legal equality for women and girls.

One measure of the achievement of Goal 3, in particular, should be meeting the concrete promises outlined in international human rights frameworks with regard to gender equality. For example, 15 years ago, in the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing (which is "an agenda for women's empowerment"), 189 Governments agreed that laws that discriminate against women undermine equality and pledged to "revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex". Yet inequality, including in its most overt form, has not been vanquished. The target date of 2005 established by the General Assembly for revocation of those laws has come and gone. Most recently, in a resolution adopted at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in March 2010, Member States again urged States to review and, where appropriate, revise, amend or abolish all laws that discriminated against women and girls or have a discriminatory impact on women and girls, 15 years after the goal had first been set.

In our reports, *Words and Deeds: Holding Governments Accountable in the Beijing Review Process*, published in 1999, 2004 and 2010, Equality Now highlights explicitly discriminatory laws with regard to violence against women, personal status, economic status and marital status. These laws prevent the full participation of women at all levels of society, thereby hindering their personal development and denying them their fundamental right to equality.

The *Millennium Development Goals Report 2009* noted, in the section on Goal 3, that although more women had been able to secure paid jobs outside agriculture, they had generally failed to access decent work. This is not surprising when a woman is prohibited by law in some countries from certain types and hours of employment or prohibited by her husband from freely choosing employment. Other laws, such as the recent Shia Personal Status Law of 2009 in Afghanistan, indirectly affect women's participation in employment by limiting a married woman's freedom to leave the house.

Resolution 12/17, adopted by the Human Rights Council in October 2009, requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to report on how the issue of discrimination against women, in law and practice, was addressed throughout the United Nations system. The issue will be taken up again in September 2010, coinciding with the Millennium Development Goals summit. Equality Now urges all Member States to support the creation of a special mechanism on equality before the law to aid Member States to remove remaining sex discriminatory laws as a concrete step towards fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals.

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Statement submitted by Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34175 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

Women's empowerment is a key to successful development

Recognizing the positive steps of States towards implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the Central Asian region, the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan and the Feminist League are expressing concern about the continuing challenges faced by poor and marginalized women in the region. Women don't need only political declarations; women need adequate mechanisms, equal opportunities, adequate resources and concrete action.

We express our deep concerns about the very negative impact on the lives of women of political turbulence, globalization and militarism, the global economic and financial crisis, growing religious fundamentalism and the strengthening of patriarchal attitudes towards women. We call for implementing commitment to reach women's empowerment.

Women's participation in political processes is crucial for reaching the Millennium Development Goals. Women continue to be dramatically underrepresented in decision-making positions in all five Central Asian republics. It is necessary to have a uniform State programme and an effective implementation and monitoring mechanism on women's political empowerment, to include women in decision-making bodies as heads of those bodies, to allocate finances in the State budget for those purposes and to overcome conservative and patriarchal attitudes towards women's effective and full political participation. Equal representation and participation of women and men in decision-making is one the fundamental steps for addressing social and economic issues in an integrated way. States should: (a) include women and women's organizations into development cooperation development actors; (b) adopt and implement temporary special measures to increase the level of women's representation in all decision-making positions; (c) start gender budgeting initiatives and allocate State budget finances for women's rights; (d) attract international financial support through inclusion of women's rights in a country's priorities list.

Women should be empowered to overcome the impact of the global crisis. Women suffer financial, economic and social impacts from the global economic crisis at the macroeconomic, microeconomic and personal levels. Women in Central Asia already have unequal access to economic and financial resources and decision-making; more then 85 per cent of the wealth in our countries is owned by men. Women entrepreneurs have fewer opportunities to get access to financial resources because real wealth is concentrated in men's hands. In rural Kyrgyzstan, only 12 per cent of farms are headed by women, while more then 90 per cent of the arable land, cattle, poultry, and agricultural and processing machinery is owned by men.

We call for special international, regional and national funds for supporting women's economic initiatives and for strengthening national institutional machineries and gender mainstreaming in all line ministries of the Governments. Women should be present at the table when solutions are being discussed to support economic growth rooted in gender equality and social justice.

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Statement submitted by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34184 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

Considerable financial resources are required for the implementation of universal gender equality. Compared to military spending, however, the amount required seems small. In 2008, the global military expenditure was $1,464 billion, or $217 per capita. Funding gender equality, as set out in the Millennium Development Goals, would cost less than 20 per cent of military spending.

The World Bank has estimated that it would cost $7 to $13 per capita to finance intervention aimed at achieving gender equality in low-income countries. The amount spent on French military equipment in one year would cover this need for a whole year. The amount that the United States of America spends on military research and development in one year would be enough to cover this need for five years.

Reducing the gender gap at all levels of education is one indicator of gender equality. Meeting the target of gender parity in secondary education would cost $3 billion in additional resources. This is less than the cost of four to nine days occupying Iraq. Providing sexual and reproductive health services is also essential to improving the life choices available to women, as well as to reaching the reduced maternal mortality goal contained in the Millennium Development Goals.

The goal of increased gender equality is inextricably linked with the other Millennium Development Goals. In fact, gender equality is integral to the achievement of each of the development goals.

According to the World Bank, 35 to 52 per cent of the total funding required to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals will directly or indirectly facilitate the achievement of gender equality objectives. Investments aimed at increasing gender equality need to be directed towards all sectors of society. The World Bank estimates that over 90 per cent of the costs associated with achieving gender equality and women's empowerment are in fact implemented through sector programmes, and that it is critical that Governments invest in gender equality interventions if they hope to achieve the other Millennium Development Goals.

In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, Governments must fulfil their promises to increase official assistance. The amount necessary for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals was estimated to be $135 billion in 2006, rising to $195 billion in 2015. These figures are respectively equivalent to between 0.44 and 0.54 per cent of donor gross national product.

In 2007, the United States of America spent 4.0 per cent of its gross domestic product on the military. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France and China are not far behind, spending 2.4, 2.3 and 2 per cent of gross domestic product, respectively, for military purposes. Governments have undertaken to increase their overseas development assistance to 0.7 per cent of national gross domestic product, but there has not been any significant increase of aid since 2004. At the same time, military expenditure continues to increase.

The amounts spent by Governments on their militaries attests to how much money is available for transformative action. In 2009, the Secretary-General reported that while progress had been made, it had been too slow to enable most of the Millennium Development Goals targets to be reached by 2015. Cuts in military expenditure, with proportional increases in funding for interventions that benefit women and wider society, could put achieving these important goals back on track.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Soroptimist International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34190 (E) 140610

Please recycle

Statement

When mainstreaming isn't enough: the gendered barriers to achieving the Millennium Development Goals

Lois lives in Sierra Leone. As a small girl she was orphaned when both of her parents died in the war. With no income, no housing, and no vocational skills, she felt she had no other choice but to turn to sex work. She soon became pregnant. After her daughter's birth, life for Lois became increasingly difficult. She reached a breaking point when she began to feel as though she might have to abandon her daughter.

Ludmilla lives in the Republic of Moldova. Her father died when she was a young girl. Since then, her life, as she put it, has been a horror movie. Her mother left when Ludmilla was 13, leaving her to care for her six-year-old brother and two-year-old sister. A young girl herself, she was suddenly thrust into the role of mother and caregiver. With no one else to take care of her younger siblings, Ludmilla had to drop out of school.

A young Ethiopian woman was found in a dark hut where she had lain on a goatskin bed for many years suffering from an obstetric fistula. She had bed sores down to the bone. The young woman had lain still for so long hoping that she would stop leaking that she lost the use of her legs and could not walk. She was so psychologically depressed she did not speak.

These stories are not unusual. In conflict-ravaged Sierra Leone, 93 per cent of urban resident women and 94 per cent of rural women who are economically active are not paid; female-headed households are typically poorer than male-headed households. The Republic of Moldova is the poorest nation in Europe, as a result of the instability caused by the transition period in the 1990s. The Republic of Moldova has become one of the leading source countries for human trafficking, with women and girls at particular risk. The economic situation is so dire that 70 per cent of adolescents think that working in the sex industry is a good way to earn money.

An in-depth study in Ethiopia found that women are seriously disadvantaged in education, economics, employment and health. A strong societal belief that women should marry young and assume household responsibilities is one of the primary factors leading to Ethiopia's striking gender gap.

Although gender has been mainstreamed into policies and political arenas, we still hear of such experiences, every day, in every country around the world.

Soroptimist International works to ensure that these stories stop, one woman and one girl at a time. We are approaching 90,000 Soroptimists, representing more than 3,000 local clubs in 124 countries/territories. Soroptimist International hears the voices of women and girls around the world and listens to their needs. We understand what works through our worldwide network of local and national projects and initiatives. As a global collective of women for women, we hold that empowering women, particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, through vocational and life skills training and leadership and confidence-building (alongside the provision of opportunities), is the missing link to the achievement of all of the Millennium Development Goals.

This strategy has proved to be successful in the work of Soroptimist International around the world. The stories we shared earlier, in fact, all have happy endings. Lois from Sierra Leone became a participant in the Soroptimist partnered project "Project Sierra", which works to help disadvantaged women in the aftermath of conflict in Sierra Leone to face their futures with confidence through skills training. Lois graduated from the "Young mothers' programme" and is now working for the Sierra Leone police force, living independently and providing for her daughter. Her dream is to become a Sierra Leone policewoman in a United Nations peacekeeping mission for officers. Ludmilla was given the opportunity to participate in the Soroptimist project entitled "Hopes and dreams for everyone", which focuses on the prevention of human trafficking from the Republic of Moldova by providing life skills education and sustainable living conditions for vulnerable children. Ludmilla went back to school and finished with excellent grades. She has overcome the hardships and problems she faced and is now working towards getting a career. The young Ethiopian woman was brought to the Hamlin Fistula Hospital and joined the Soroptimist project entitled "Restoring dignity: securing a future", which focuses not only on physical healing but also on mental and emotional healing through education and vocational training. After months of rehabilitation and physiotherapy she began to come alive again. She has begun to talk and socialize and now walks and has learned to read and write. She is currently the official recordkeeper for the dairy and records the milk production from each cow every day.

These hopeful and happy endings have that missing link in common. They all address the root, underlying causes of gendered barriers to equality, in these cases, poverty, economic vulnerability, and health — in other words, a lack of skills, confidence, and opportunities. Soroptimist projects aim to empower women by identifying particularly vulnerable community members, learning about the barriers they face in their daily lives and providing the skills necessary to overcome the challenges that impede women and girls from achieving their full potential.

Soroptimist International posits that there are two primary aspects of the current approach to the Millennium Development Goals that present opportunities for improvement. First, we believe that the international community does not use the term "empowerment" consistently. Rather, it has come to mean many things for many different people; it is a term that is now commonly bandied about and is, unfortunately, losing its impact and meaning. Soroptimist International wishes to propose that the definition of empowerment include much more than simply a description of activities, such as ensuring that girls attend school, electing female politicians or offering employment opportunities to women. Rather, empowerment should refer to the process that leads up to those outcomes and during which women and girls are provided with the tools to take ownership of their own future. Empowerment should refer to offering women tangible skills and the confidence to use them. A woman or girl with a viable skill and the self-belief to use that skill is truly an empowered woman or girl. In this way, the empowerment, defined through the skills and confidence framework used by Soroptimist International, complements enabling, defined as changing the social, economic, political and cultural environments that present barriers to gender equality.

In short, we need to empower women and girls with skills and confidence and we need to enable communities to allow women and girls to participate meaningfully. To date, much of the meaningful and active focus of the Millennium

Development Goals has been on the enabling framework and not necessarily on the empowerment framework.

Second, Soroptimist International believes that the gendered barriers to achieving the Millennium Development Goals have been looked at in an isolated manner. When the international community talks about gender and the Millennium Development Goals, all too often it is only in reference to the Millennium Development Goals that specifically relate to women or girls (i.e., Goals 3 and 5). Yet the kind of empowerment advocated by Soroptimist must be part of the strategy to achieving every single one of the Millennium Development Goals. Poverty, education, child mortality, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases, and environmental sustainability cannot be achieved without empowering women and girls with skills and confidence. We know that addressing underlying social and economic determinants for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged will benefit everyone along the social gradient. Therefore, the best strategy for achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals is to empower the most vulnerable women and girls by addressing underlying social and economic determinants, a strategy that, to date, has also not meaningfully been at the forefront of the work to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

With this background in mind, Soroptimist International wishes to make the following recommendations to the Economic and Social Council, as the international development community bands together in the final five-year push to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015:

- The international community should come to a consensus on the meaning of the term "empowerment", using the skills and confidence framework proposed by Soroptimist International.
- The commitments in the Beijing Platform for Action should remain at the forefront of the discussions and decisions relating to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
- The meaning of "empowerment" should be translated into best practices, with a shared framework of measurements and outcomes, implemented both within and across all sectors involved in international development.
- "Gender equality" should not become synonymous with "women's equality". Empowering women and girls without involving men and boys will achieve minimal, short-term results. Men and boys must be an integral part of empowerment programmes as we work to address the underlying social and economic determinants of the vulnerabilities of women and girls.
- The international community should continue to pay special attention to the global economic crisis and its impact on vulnerable communities, particularly women working in the informal and/or agricultural sector. There is a grave danger that the strides we have made will be reversed in the light of the current global financial climate.
- International non-governmental organizations should progress further in focusing on partnering with local community-based organizations in order to build ownership and capacity and to involve and listen to the voices of women and girls. Development simply is not possible without including those affected by the decisions in the decisions.

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Statement submitted by Misión Mujer, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34227 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

The effectiveness of development efforts in reaching every person rightly preoccupies the thoughts of members of global civil society. Different strategies and actions have been applied in order to address the Millennium Development Goals as the principal measures of progress. Nevertheless, it seems as if the efforts have not been sufficient or adequate enough: are we hitting the key challenges in achieving equity and integral development for all?

The development agenda clearly targets the most pressing development issues, from poverty reduction, health, employment and education to human rights, sustainable development, finance and effective governance. All of these issues are important, but are there specific cross-cutting issues that, if dealt with successfully, may generate a positive impact on all of them?

The transcendent cross-cutting issue that immediately affects the other development issues is education. Universal and equitable access to quality education is integral to all the efforts to eradicate poverty, as well as to generating a domino effect on solving the majority of the problems occurring in every country, in particular developing ones. It is undeniable that all the goals and the activities proposed to achieve quality education for every person will require short-, middle- and long-term investment; nevertheless, we think this is the only effective path to find a clear response to such urgent matters as violence, drugs and HIV/AIDS. The engagement and participation of civil society in cooperation with Governments in order to make progress on this issue is vital.

The second cross-cutting issue is the promotion of a more integral gender perspective. This obviously means including women, but also male issues in the development agenda. Men, as well as women, also suffer from stereotyped models of what it "means to be a man", such as those that glorify violence, criminal behaviour, unsafe sexual practices, substance abuse and even suicide. The consequences of the crisis of masculinity are pronounced and also have a negative impact on women. Among men, there is also a lack of: sense of belonging, respectable level of income, and economic and recreational opportunities, especially for young men. Important commentators have noted that frustration and anger over the unequal distribution of opportunities are breeding grounds for violence and that gender identity is clearly as much an issue for men as it is for women. For that reason, women's empowerment should not mean the disempowerment of men. Gender is relational, and both issues are consequential for development. As experience has demonstrated, interventions directed at women are not always as effective if they do not have men's cooperation. Therefore, if we want to end the gender inequities that especially affect developing countries, a more comprehensive, male-inclusive gender paradigm should be promoted through international policies and actions. Gender mainstreaming funds should also target men, including by engaging them in primary health care or in specialized reproductive and sexual health clinics, by creating media campaigns to promote positive images of men involved in their children's lives, and by promoting HIV/AIDS programmes.

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Statement submitted by China NGO Network for International Exchanges, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34233 (E) 110610

Please recycle

Statement

Women empowerment in development of outlying regions

The 5th Conference of the United Nations Non-Governmental Organizations Informal Regional Network (UN-NGO-IRENE)/Asia-Pacific on women empowerment in the development of outlying regions was held in Xining City, Qinghai Province, China, on 2 April 2010 under the sponsorship of China NGO Network for International Exchanges. The Conference was attended by about 50 delegates representing about 30 non-governmental organizations from 10 Asian countries, namely, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The participants had extensive discussions on the three subthemes: the present situation of women in the outlying regions, empowering women for economic and social development in the outlying regions and tapping non-governmental organization resources for women's development in the outlying regions.

- Considering that "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments with regard to gender equality and empowerment of women" has been established as the theme for the annual ministerial review, and the Development Cooperation Forum of the Economic and Social Council in 2010,
- Recalling the United Nations Millennium Summit held in 2000, the eight Millennium Development Goals in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and Goal 3 ("Promote gender equality and empower women"), in particular,
- Acknowledging that the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the outlying regions plays a key role in accomplishing Goal 3, and the eight Millennium Development Goals in general,
- Noting the master set of data contained in *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009* compiled by an Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in response to the wishes of the General Assembly for periodic assessment of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals,
- Affirming the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 10-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 15-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,
- Referring to the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Keeping the promise: a forward looking review to promote an agreed action agenda to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015", which serves as the basis for Member States deliberations on the outcome document for the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, to be held in New York from 20 to 22 September 2010, to boost progress towards the Millennium Development Goals,

- Recalling the documents concluded in the previous four annual conferences of NGO-IRENE/Asia-Pacific held in Beijing under the co-sponsorship of the China NGO Network for International Exchanges and the Non-Governmental Organizations Branch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs,

- Welcoming the efforts made by Governments, intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations, civil society organizations and the private sector at the international, regional, national and local levels to empower women in terms of political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, educational and other rights, as well as to improve their health care, sanitation, water supply and security conditions, while noting insufficiencies and gaps in some areas, and urging Governments to redouble their efforts in this regard,

- Recognizing that although the Asia-Pacific region has been established as an economic powerhouse and has experienced rapid economic growth, inequalities have grown in many countries and women in the outlying regions face the most severe challenges of poverty and discrimination, especially in the wake of the recent world financial and economic crises,

We, participants of the 5th Conference of the UN-NGO-IRENE/Asia-Pacific, would hereby conclude the following recommendations to the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council in 2010:

(a) Concerted efforts at international, regional, national and local levels should be intensified to guarantee the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly;

(b) Governments should provide sufficient political, financial, institutional and other relevant support to ensure the participation of women on an equal basis with men at all levels of decision-making processes;

(c) More intensive efforts should be made by the Governments, civil society and the private sector to ensure full employment and the generation of decent work for women;

(d) Partnerships among the Governments, civil society and the private sector should be enhanced to promote gender equality. The UN-NGO-IRENE/Asia-Pacific, as a network having effectively operated for five years, should be encouraged to strengthen its role as a platform to coordinate and assist both regional and national non-governmental organizations in moving further towards gender equality and to help with the implementation of Goal 3 as well as the other Millennium Development Goals;

(e) Enterprises and corporations should adopt appropriate strategies to promote the rights, welfare of and equal pay for women workers, in particular women workers from the outlying regions with a family living on their remittance;

(f) The stereotypical attitudes and behaviour towards women and girls should be changed, and men should be encouraged to bear equal responsibilities with women in areas such as domestic and caregiving work;

(g) With public education, vocational education and skills training becoming more accessible and affordable for girls and women in urban areas, girls and women

in rural and outlying regions should have equal access to public education, vocational education and skills training at all levels, as well as other public and social services, so as to improve their productivity and abilities for making a living;

(h) Governments should make sufficient investments into physical and social infrastructures, in particular in energy and water resources, to alleviate the burden of unpaid work that typically involves women;

(i) All women should have the rights to enjoy high-quality, affordable and accessible health care, education and services, so as to reduce maternal mortality, increase births assisted by skilled attendants, have access to safe and effective family planning and contraceptive methods and reduce the risk of diseases;

(j) Comprehensive strategies and efforts should be made to eliminate violence against women and girls, to combat all forms of trafficking in women and girls and to prevent sex-selective abortions. Efforts should also be made to protect women and girls victimized by or living under the threat of violence, to investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence and to engage communities and civil society organizations in eliminating violence against women and girls. Shelter should be provided to them when necessary;

(k) Governments should improve conditions for livelihood of women living under conflict situations or being internally displaced;

(l) In the light of the special difficulties encountered by women in outlying regions in their empowerment of economic and social rights, Governments and social organizations at all levels should adopt concrete measures to initiate and support projects dedicated to improving their chances of participation and to building their capacities.

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Economic and environmental questions: sustainable development

Statement submitted by Institute for Planetary Synthesis, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

10-34239 (E) 250510

Please recycle

Statement

People and commons: global partnership missing links

The environment, the economy and social relationships are interrelated aspects of sustainable development and what are increasingly being referred to as commons.

Commons are shared resources that naturally belong to collectives and provide the natural and social capital upon which all life depends. Therefore, where people have the jurisdiction to do so, they tend to be highly motivated to sustain their commons, and these commoners have developed countless initiatives to achieve this. A rights-based approach to sustainable development — based upon environmental protection and restoration, economic prosperity and social justice to benefit all people and the planet as a whole — would recognize the value of various local, regional, national and global commons. This would motivate people and form the strongest possible foundation for a global partnership for development.

Governments need the support of the people to equitably and sustainably manage various commons and undo their unsustainable patterns of production and consumption at local through global scales. Where Governments support people to take greater responsibility for their vital resources, they will: (a) motivate citizens and businesses to support commitments to sustainability; (b) engage citizens and businesses in being proactive about sustainability; (c) educate citizens and businesses about their consumption patterns and costs to the environment; and (d) generate equitable funding that reinforces healthy patterns of production and consumption through improved protection of various commons.

The incorporation of people and their commons in actions that benefit all people and the planet as a whole is the strongest possible foundation for global partnerships for sustainable development. It integrates sustainable local, regional, national and international development because all parties and initiatives reinforce one another.

Here are a few structural changes inspired by a commons approach: (a) achieving the internalization of environmental costs; (b) establishing rules and guidelines for the use and management of common resources; (c) creating incentives for sustainable development; (d) setting rents or surcharges on the use of common resources; (e) developing economic instruments that increase as the sustainability of the commons increase, with benefits accruing to people of the given commons. Thousands of initiatives can be found on the many websites dedicated to local to global commons (including www.onthecommons.org) and in the work of Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom.

Because they are dedicated to preserving the global commons for all people and the world as a whole, global commoners can integrate global partnerships for development.

We request Governments to create a panel of experts within the United Nations Secretariat to explore with experts on the commons ways to incorporate a commons approach into global strategies for sustainable development. The panel would report back to the preparatory committee for the Rio+20 conference to inform the preparations for that summit.

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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Israel Women's Network, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

Women of Valour programme

Equipping disadvantaged women with the skills, knowledge and self-confidence to gain rewarding employment is crucial to achieving gender equality. Especially important in a time of global financial crisis, promoting women's involvement in the workforce can serve to relieve women and their families of the stifling conditions of poverty and economic dependence.

The Israel Women's Network is determined to improve the status of women in Israel regardless of their religious outlook, political affiliation or ethnic origin. In Israel, poverty is on the rise and women's reports of poverty are consistently high according to various indices. For instance, in 2007, 23 per cent of Israeli women reported that they reduce food purchasing due to poverty, compared with 18 per cent of men (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Striving to assist women in breaking free from the cycle of poverty and unemployment, the Israel Women's Network operates its Women of Valour programme. For more than five years, the project has successfully empowered unemployed women of various backgrounds with the tools to thrive in the workforce and in all realms of life.

Women of Valour reaches out to women aged 30 to 50 from low-income families all over Israel. The programme extends to both Israeli-born and immigrant women, focusing on the vulnerable Arab, Ethiopian, Bukhari and Caucasian (former Soviet Union countries) populations. These women have been unemployed for a long period or have never worked. They tend to lack education or work skills and come from traditional backgrounds that promote early marriage and are expected to stay at home with children instead of earning a living.

Working with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services and local municipalities, the programme operates over 20 groups across the country. Led by professional facilitators, each group of women undertakes a three-year process. In the first year, workshops acquaint women with the employment market and its expectations. Drawing on their natural attributes, they are taught critical skills, such as writing curricula vitae and communications. At this stage, the programme seeks to enhance the women's feelings of self-worth. In the second year, the participants are assisted with job placement. An employment club serves as a source of professional and social support during the second and third years of the programme.

Over 1,000 women have participated in Women of Valour over the past five years, and successful entry into the workforce is estimated at 75 per cent. The Israel Women's Network is working hard to bring about positive social change in Israel and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We hope that our collaboration with local municipalities and federal ministries will lead to the expansion of Women of Valour so that every woman can have access to the rewarding employment and satisfying life conditions she deserves.